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SUBJECT: PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND SELF-HELP HOST ARTS AND CRAFTS  
FAIR

1. (U) Summary: Public Diplomacy funded the Self-Help Program with end of year grant money to host an exposition and sale of locally made arts and crafts. The Self-Help Program has funded many Associations that teach women and girls the skills of sewing, as well as their traditional crafts. This exposition was the first of its kind to bring together women from all the districts of Djibouti to showcase their work, and to provide a venue for sales. At the conclusion of the event a roundtable discussion was held which allowed each woman the opportunity to express the challenges they face, as well as to discuss solutions and the future of their industry here in Djibouti. End Summary.

2. (U) Prior to the opening of the exposition Self-Help met with representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and from the Ministry of Tourism. We had many opportunities to convey the message of the ongoing commitment of the US to the development and strengthening of the arts and crafts industry of Djibouti as well as our commitment to fighting poverty at all levels.

3. (U) Ambassador and the Director of Tourism Mohamed Abdillahi opened the exposition on the 22nd of February at 10am with speeches. Other dignitaries in attendance were: Ambassador Ahmed Abdelwahed Zein of Egypt, Ambassador Ismail Abdel Dafie of Sudan, Ambassador Abdoulaziz Bin Mohamed al-Aifan of Saudi Arabia, Ambassador Abdourab Ali Al-Salafi of Yemen, Ambassador Philip Selz of France, Ambassador Kamal A. Gazzaz of the Palestinian Authority, Honorary Consul Alain Martinet of Great Britain, Ambassador Alexander Bregadze of Russia, and General Helland of Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF HOA). There was significant media coverage by television RTD, and a great deal of positive feedback from dignitaries in attendance. The event continued through the 24th of February and was closed with remarks by Ambassador, Director of Tourism Mohamed Abdillahi, Minister of Commerce and Industry Salaman Omar Oudine, and two association presidents Amina Idriss, and Fatouma Hassan.

4. (U) At the conclusion of the closing ceremony, a roundtable discussion was held with Dr. Mayoub of the Association Bender Djedid as moderator, and Mohamed Abdillahi leading the talk. The purpose of this discussion was to give representatives from the associations in attendance the opportunity to voice their opinions about the challenges they face in craft production and marketing, and to discuss solutions to these challenges. There was a helpful exchange of ideas, and a consensus on a need for more collaboration, and a great need for technical as well as financial help to improve the arts and crafts industry to bring it to a level competitive with other African countries.

5. (U) The Self-Help Program also had a promotional exhibit on display to expand public knowledge of the program. This included pictures of past projects, and information on how to apply for future funding. This was well received; we answered many questions about the program and how to submit proposals for future projects. We are optimistic that this exposure to the public will result in a greater number and variety of project proposals for the 2005 funding cycle.

6. (U) The Public Diplomacy Section also displayed Black History Month posters during the exposition. We received feedback that the posters were a nice addition to the event. Total PD funds spent 775,900.30 DF (4,383.62 USD). This amount included the hall rental, advertisement, drinks, food, and miscellaneous items.

7. (U) This event was a great service to the associations that we have funded. It gave them an excellent opportunity to display and to sell their handmade items. They were able to explain their ancestral craft, and show to the public the skills required to make their products. All the participating associations expressed their gratitude to the US Embassy for sponsoring this event. This event was well attended by the community, and well received. Self-Help hopes to encourage the associations to repeat this type of event in the future.